

sense of striving; gentleness, love, sympathy—that large-hearted sympathy that is to put us in touch with mankind in all the ages—these were to be the means whereby we attain the newness that we should have. Sympathy that should reach from the “Early Ages to the vast fields of Modern Life.” The effect that the beauty of words and phrases have on children—the way they feel them and appreciate them—was another point which I think all must find practical example of in their work. Then here is a word for anxious teachers:—“Let the children dig out their own knowledge when they can. So gained, it is worth far more than what is given by the teacher. Too much explanation is apt to leave only the mechanical hang of the subject,” and rob it of the true inwardness it might have had if it had been left to the child’s assimilation. “I think I could understand better, mother, if you did not explain so much.”

I am afraid I give these thoughts only roughly, but you must polish the diamonds for yourselves.

Dr. Laing Gordon’s paper was enthusiastically listened to; it was thickly sprinkled with sugar-plums for the P.N.E.U., which was just what it ought to have been. He seemed to be a magician or a trader in babies; one expected to see them or hear them, to punctuate his theories and suggestions, which were full of common sense. Miss Firth was another very practical person. I am sure many mothers went away sure that nothing but the thermometer should stand between their children and a Ripplingill stove. Perhaps a prominent note throughout the Conference was: Be practical. There were many theories, old and new, but all were to some extent perfectly practical. “Do not theorise, but *do*. Try everything—solitude, browsing in books, country life, many interests, above all, habits of mind. If one thing does not succeed, try another—study your children, not as pegs for your theories, but as practical teachers, training you. Have a method and aim at continuity—aim high, and remember the best work is unseen.” Such are some of the footprints left by that delightful week.

E. C. ALLEN.

THE CONVERSAZIONE.

I AM asked to write on the *Conversazione* from “a personal standpoint.” I conclude this means I am to say what I thought about it. I think the first thing that struck me was what a large gathering it was. We had the big room in S. Martin’s Town Hall, and it was full. It makes one feel what a big thing it is, this Union of ours, and how the cause is spreading. The early part of the evening was given up to speeches, and some interesting papers were read. The chair was taken by Lady Campbell, in the absence of Lady Aberdeen, and very graciously and sympathetically she took it. One of the speakers was Professor Earl Barnes, an American professor, who has been making a great study of child psychology and taking statistics for some time in London. He spoke, amongst other things, of the need of bringing town children in touch with country life, and he suggested that large board schools should be built in the country and the children taken there every morning, either by train or in waggons, so that their school-day should be spent among things that mean so much more to them than any books can teach. This plan is being tried in one or two parts of America, and so far, I believe, is working well.

Mr. Sadler spoke with great animation. He is so enthusiastic and emphatic, you are carried along almost breathlessly and sent back with a sigh when he ceases. Perhaps one of the most interesting people on the platform was a Russian lady, who had come all the way from Moscow to be present at the Conference. I could not hear what she said, as I was some way back and her English was rather broken though fluent; but, I believe, she is trying to start a sort of P.N.E.U. in Russia and wanted to gain any information as to the working of the Society in England.

After the speeches there was a great buzz of conversation and a general movement towards the table at one end of the room, where tea and coffee were to be had. This is a very delightful part of the evening, as one meets so many old

friends, and renews old acquaintanceships. It was so very nice to see Mrs. and Miss Firth again, and brought back most vividly the memory of Saturday afternoons spent in their lovely house and garden. Mrs. Franklin was most kind and one felt she was doing so much towards the success of the evening. It is needless to say how terribly Miss Mason was missed, and I think we all felt it was a little hard that she, who is the originator of it all, should not be there to see the success of her work.

I was glad I had thoroughly examined all the exhibits at the Natural History Exhibition in the afternoon, as the crowd was much too great in the evening to see anything of them, and some were well worth seeing, especially the Nature Note-books.

I only wish all the students could have been there; it is so inspiring to be brought into touch with the wider life of the Union.

J. M. BAIRD.

A NATURAL-HISTORY AFTERNOON AT THE CONFERENCE.

NOR the least attractive of the many delights offered to us at the Conference was the Exhibition of the Natural History Club and a charming lecture by the Rev. Theodore Wood, son of the great naturalist. For the sake of the many of our fellow-students who had not the pleasure of hearing the lecture, I am sending the following outline of it, although it can be but a poor substitute for the original, which, besides being illustrated by excellent blackboard diagrams, was given with a quiet humour which made it additionally enjoyable.

Having introduced his subject by narrating the (to us) well-known story of the walk taken by "Eyes and No-Eyes," the lecturer told us that what we manage to see when out on a country walk is largely a matter of habit. We may train our observing faculties until we notice almost as a matter of

course even so small a thing as a beetle no larger than a pin's head. If we would see much of Nature we must learn to *keep still* at times, lying or sitting without even so much as winking an eye, for there is nothing that so alarms wild creatures as motion.

One of the specimens we may often see in the country is a *Squirrel*—and we should notice three points in his structure, viz., his teeth, toes, and tail. Being one of the rodents, his teeth are arranged like nippers, and, however much work they do, they never wear away, because they are always growing. Neither do they become blunt, being composed of two substances like a carpenter's chisel—a softer kind cased in front by a very hard enamel. His toes, too, are not made for climbing but for jumping, and if you closely watch a squirrel you will see he does not *run* up a tree, but goes by a series of jumps. To aid him in this his joints are peculiarly arranged so that he can tuck them well against his body as a boy does his elbows in climbing a ladder. Then, too, if he falls from a great height, which rarely happens to a sure-footed squirrel, he takes no harm, for his skin is made so loosely that it acts like a parachute, while by means of his beautiful tail, which is to him what a balancing pole is to a tight-rope walker, he can preserve his balance in a marvellous way on narrow branches.

Then, again, we may sometimes come across a *Weasel*. The shortness of his legs is to be noted—miserable-looking specimens as they are compared with those of other creatures, but admirably adapted for helping him in creeping into burrows to find his prey. The spines of a *Hedgehog* are wonderfully arranged, being fastened beneath the skin to a strong, flexible muscle, by working which they can be lowered or raised at pleasure. He will require a whole jam-pot full of snails or worms per day if full-grown. The farmers will often kill the hedgehogs, thinking that because he is so fond of going near the cows when they are lying down, he does so to get their milk—but this is all a mistake. Mr. H. knows that when a heavy weight, such as a cow's body, is pressing down on the ground, the worms come up to see what is the matter, and he can, consequently, have a hearty meal!

The lecturer gave some very interesting notes on the *Kestrel* and the *Barn-Owl*, which latter does by night what